other Oh hands

Issue No. 2 July 1993

EDITORIAL: so far, so good...

Well, it's issue two and we're still afloat. Our baptismal issue of *Other Hands* was a great success — one hundred and twenty copies were printed of which less than twenty now remain. More importantly, we have made progress in arranging for a European contact to distribute our journal throughout the EEC, which will hopefully reduce our overseas subscription rates. At the present moment we can boast of twenty-two regular subscribers, in addition to having an axchange relationship with *Beyond Bree* and *Estel* (the journal of the Sociedad Tolkien Española). A small beginning, perhaps, but a beginning nonetheless.

What has been going on in the world of Middle-earth gaming since April? Behind the scenes with *MERP,* the authors of the forthcoming *Usurper's Reign* module (announced last issue) have recently joined forces with the writer of the projected revision of the 1982 *Umbar* module in order to synthesize the parts of their respective work which overlap. This collaborative process may delay publication a bit, but we hope that the resulting harmony (and mutual enrichment) of material will be well worth the wait.

Incidentally, much of the artwork you will be seeing in the next few issues will include some of the preliminary character sketches whose later incarnations may end up in *The Usurper's Reign* (so forgive us if we appear preoccupied with the Kinstrife!). Although Iron Crown will be using its own artists for that module, the authors on the project decided to commission these sketches as suggestive guides. And, of course (need I say?), if you find them abhorrent do not hesitate to take matters into your own hands by sending us your own artwork.

This brings us to the matter of reader participation. You may notice that this issue is somewhat thinner than its predecessor; that is because *you* haven't yet sent us all of that wonderful gaming material you have hidden away in your closet. We know that there arc brilliant gamers out there just waiting to submit stuff to this, your gaming journal. So do it; we want *Other Hands* to be BIG.

Having carved out a niche for ourselves between Iron Crown Enterprises in Virginia and Tolkien Enterprises in Berkeley, we are now continuing discussions with the latter regarding the legality of publishing actual adventure scenarios within these pages. *Other Hands* is intended to be a *practical* journal of useful stuff for gamemasters, as well as an open forum for conversing about Middle-earth and role-playing generally, so we are strongly hoping to gain permission to do just that.

The key legal issue at stake for the licensing division of Tolkien Enterprises is whether or not the publication of such material in our journal in any way undermines the exclusivity of ICE's world-wide license over Tolkien-related role-playing games (see *OH* 1: 1,3). Anyone with a constructive opinion on this matter should send their comments in writing to Tolkien Enterprises: PO Box 200S, Berkeley, CA 94702.

And now for introducing the contributions to the present issue. We are honored to have the name of Jorge Qiñónez joining the roster of *Other Hands* authors with his response to Anders Blixt concerning the presence of Elves in Middle-earth during the Fourth Age. Jorge is the founder of the Elvish Linguistic Fellowship and founding editor of its prestigious journal *Vinyar Tengwar.* He was at one time working on a *Lindon* module for ICE, and while lecturing me over the phone about

the trials and tribulations of being an editor, offered to write the present piece for us.

My own essay on religion in Middle-earth is an attempt define the role of cult and ritual in a role-playing context by taking the example of Númenor and its successor realms. On a somewhat lighter note, we decided to inaugurate (another) new feature of *Other Hands*: interview profiles of charcters that have been played in a Middle-earth campaign (a more "user-friendly" way of communicating adventure or character ideas to other role-players).

Credit for this idea goes to Jeff Hatch (our resident artist), whose own veteran character now has the honor of being the first Middle-earth character to have ever been interviewed by a Tolkien-related journal. Jeff has offered to do character drawings for anyone else who wishes to submit such an interview piece about one of their own characters. The contributor is asked to include gaming stats and a written or sketched description of the interviewed character.

Anders Blixt will already be known to those who have read our first issue. He is a seasoned free-lance game writer who has contributed to the well-received *Gorgoroth* module. He is also the content editor for *The Usurper's Reign* as well as for a projected future collaborative effort which will incorporate a revised and re-issued version of *Havens of Gondor* and *Sea-lords of Gondor* (see *OH* 1: 5). His short piece on game design for Middle-earth is reflective of his long experience with writing and publishing in Sweden.

A brief word about advertising. *Other Hands* is a non-profit publication, and any promotional material appearing within its pages is either for the purpose of alerting Middle-earth gamers to publications of interest, or (in the case of the *Interface* add on our back cover) it represents a free exchange, whereby the advertised journal will reciprocally contain an advertisement for *Other Hands.* In this way, our journal will get wider exposure to other gamers who may end up becoming subscribers.

So far, so good. Let's hope we can keep this journal in good health, and that an increase in subscribers will lead to a corresponding increase in reader participation and contribution to these pages. Enjoy! OH

Chris Seeman, 20 June, 1993

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Statement of Purpose:

Other Hands is an international gaming journal devoted to fantasy role-playing set in J.R.R. Tolkien's secondary world of Middle-earth. It is a quarterly, non-profit publication welcoming submissions dealing with any aspect of gaming in the context of Tolkien's world: scenario ideas, rule suggestions, gaming product review, gamermastering aids, bibliographic resources, essays on Middle-earth, and whatever else our readership would like to see in print. In a word, *Other Hands* aims to be *the* definitive Tolkien-related gaming journal for a world-wide role-playing community. Within the pages of *Other Hands* the interested gamer may publish materials with reference to any game mechanics he or she chooses (including *Rolenaster* and *Middle-earth Role Playing).* Such gaming material may deal with any time period of Tolkien's world, and need not be bound to what has already seen print in Iron Crown's modules. *Other Hands* provides this freedom because it is a non-profit publication. Subscription rites ire as follows: inside the USA — 1 issue $2/4 issues $8; outside the USA — *surface* 1 issue $3.50/4 issue $14 — *air* 1 issue S4.50/4 issues $18. All materials published by *Other Hands* remain the copyright of their individual authors.

No Elves in the Fourth Age?!

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[Note: All quotations are from the Houghton Mifflin hardcover editions. Also, SD = *Sauron Defeated*; LotR = *The Lord of the Rings*; I, II, III = The three volumes of LotR; S = *The Silmarillion*; UT = *The Unfinished Tales*.]

In the first issue of *Other Hands*, Mr. Anders Blixt states something quite dismaying about the state of affairs with the Elves (i.e., the Eldar; the Avari are not the concern of this article) in the Fourth Age. He states that "The Elves voyage to Aman or disappear into the deep forests and shun Men (p. 16)." Since this was all he stated about the Elves, he should have perhaps have not written anything; because the little that he did say comes across as a gross generalization. This article hopes to correct this as well as to shed a little light and "hope" for those of you out there who thought the Eldar were completely extinct in the Fourth Age.

To begin with, I believe the following quotation is most appropriate. In the second draft of the Epilogue to LotR, Sam speaks to his daughter, Elanor, who is afraid that all the Elves have disappeared or left Middle-earth: "You came at the end of a great Age, Elanorellë; but though it's over, as we say, things don't really end sharp like that. It's more like a winter sunset. The High Elves have nearly all gone now with Elrond. But not quite all; and those that didn't go will wait now for a while. And the others, the ones that belong here, will last even longer. There are still things for you to see, and maybe you'll see them sooner than you hope (SD 126)."

This clearly suggests that not all of the Eldar departed Endor. Elrond, Galadriel, and many others (along with Gandalf and his horse) left on a white ship at the end of the Third Age; but they certainly were not all of the Eldar of Endor. For Sam to tell his daughter that "there are still things for you to see" implies that there are enough of them for you to see if you know where to look, i.e. the places where they frequent and reside in.

—*continued next page*

In the last paragraph of the Prologue to LotR, it is stated about Rivendell (well into the Fourth Age, no less) that "though Elrond had departed, his sons [Elohir and Elladan] long remained, together with some of the High-elven folk. It is said that Celeborn went to dwell there after the departure of Galadriel; but there is no record of that day when at last he sought the Grey Havens, and with him went the last living memory of the Elder Days in Middle-earth (I 25)." This would appear to contradict my own view that Círdan would have been the Elf with "the last living memory of the Elder Days in Middle-earth"; but as I will next show, Celeborn probably waited at least several centuries, and maybe even longer, before joining his wife in the West.

Another interesting passage about the "last Elves" in Middle-earth comes from the final page of *The Silmarillion*, at which point Círdan is reported to have said the following: "my heart is with the Sea, and I will dwell by the grey shores, guarding the Havens [of Mithlond] until the last ship sails... But when all... things were done... to the Firstborn the world grew old and grey. In that time the last of the Noldor set sail from the Havens and left Middle-earth for ever... and an end was come for the Eldar of story and of song (S 304; c.f. III 366)." Since both Círdan and Celeborn were Sindar, this passage seems to imply that Círdan must have waited longer than Celeborn (unless they departed at the same time).

In a letter which he sent to Mrs. Eileen Elgar on 22 September, 1963 (the initial draft of which may be found in *Letters*: 323-333 (the final draft which I now quote from appears only in auction catalogues and remains unpublished), Tolkien stated the following about Celeborn: "He had never seen the Blessed Realm... But you must remember that Time did not seem to him as to us. The parting with Galadriel would seem brief, and the end of the world indefinitely remote... His stay would seem no more to him than, say, among mortal Men if a man was obliged to remain behind and finish his business before he followed his wife to a new home in a distant land: a short time of loneliness soon to be healed..." This curious analogy provides us with an insight about how Elves must have felt as they waited for the day when they would finally leave Endor.

Further relevant passages from the Appendices (LotR)

Appendix A: well into the Fourth Age, during the reign of Elessar "[Legolas] brought south Elves out of Greenwood, and they dwelt in Ithilien, and it became once again the fairest country in all the westlands (III 362)." This indicates that there was plenty of Elven activity occurring at the turn or beginning of the Fourth Age with the Eldar. However, Celeborn moves on to Rivendell and Legolas sails West with Gimli by the 120th year of Fourth Age.

Appendix B: "...on the day of the New Year of the Elves, Celeborn and Thranduil met in the midst of the forest; and they renamed Mirkwood Eryn Lasgalen, The Wood of Greenleaves. Thranduil took ail the northern region as far as the mountains that rise in the forest for his realm; and Celeborn took all the southern wood below the Narrows, and named it East Lórien... But after the passing of Galadriel in a few years Celeborn grew weary of his realm and went to Imladris to dwell with the sons of Elrond... (III 375)."

A Summary of the Activity of the Most Noted Eldar in the Fourth Age

1) Celeborn: At the beginning of the Fourth Age (and without his wife, Galadriel), he establishes East Lórien, He eventually wants a change of scenery and goes to Rivendell to be with his grand-nephews: Elladan and Elrohir. At some point (probably well into the Fourth Age) he leaves Rivendell for Mithlond (the Grey Havens) and sails West.

2) Círdan: He remains at the Mithlond until the last white ship sails West (III 319-320).

3) Elladan & Elrohir: Elrond's twins stay in Rivendell after their father leaves for the West.

4) Glorfindel: He is not stated to have gone West with Elrond and Galadriel (He probably stayed in Rivendell.). In the middle of the Third Age, he was quite active for a Noldo, actually going into combat with the Men of Gondor and Arthedain against the Witch-king of Angmar and his forces (III 331-332).

Last known dwelling places of the Eldar

1) Rivendell: By far the most famous settlement of the Eldar in Endor, it continues to be inhabited into the Fourth Age, by Elrohir, Elladan, (perhaps) Glorfindel, and (eventually) Celeborn.

2) Thranduil's Realm: A Sinda who ruled over Avari Elves, nothing more can be said about Thranduil except that he had good relations with the people around him, including the Men who lived near the Lake.

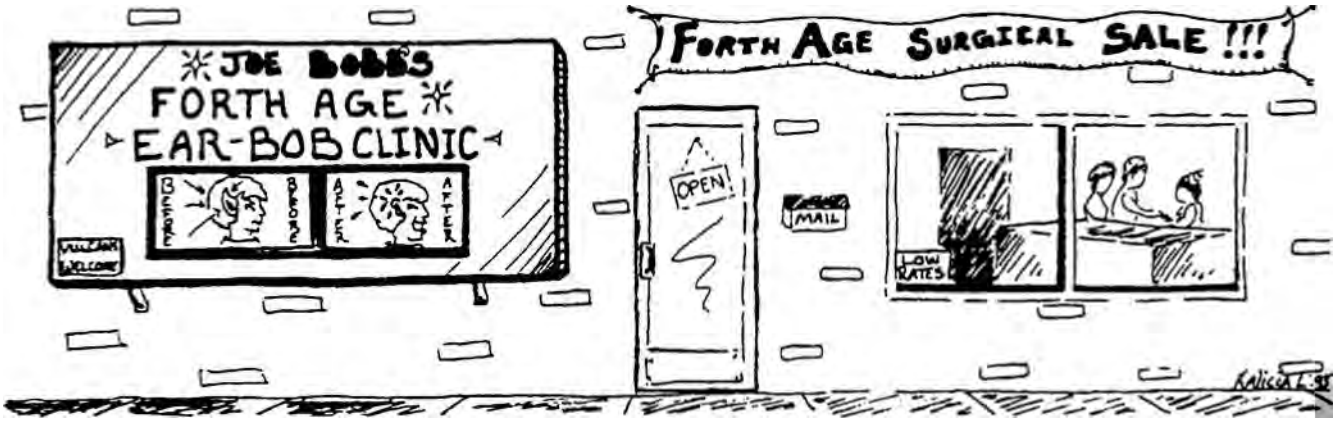
3) Mithlond: Eldar wishing to depart Endor for the West must work together with other Elves at this haven in order to construct a ship to bear them on their journey. The Mithlond, which becomes the last settlement on Endor of the Eldar, is ruled by Círdan.

4) Lindon; Although least known, this region probably held the greatest number of the Eldar in all of Middle-earth. Tolkien writes very little about it in comparison to the places just described. Being all that is left of Beleriand, it would have plenty of surprises. If ever there were an "Elvish state" in Endor, this would be it! We know that Gil-galad was its king until his death at the close of the Second Age. And though Elrond (his former herald) made no claim to Lindon, Círdan may well have acted as its ruler (however, it is hard to imagine a Sinda ruling Noldor!).

Robert Foster, author of *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth* (New York: Ballantine Boob, 1978), writes that it was probably the last dwelling place of the Eldar in Middle-earth. We know that it must have had plenty of residents, based on the fact that in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (I 89) Gildor and his party were returning from a visit to Rivendell either to the Mithlond of to Lindon beyond.

To be a little more specific, we know that Forlindon (S. North Lindon) was primarily inhabited by the Noldor, while Harlindon (S. South Lindon) was home to the Sindar (III 363; UT 252). The last that is said of Lindon in Tolkien's writings, while he was still alive, is the following quote: "Beyond the Lune was Elvish country, green and quiet, where no Man went... In the days of the Kings most of the High Elves that still lingered in Middle-earth dwelt with Círdan or in the seaward lands of Lindon. If any now remain they are few (III 320)."

In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins stated that Gandalf was "responsible for so many quiet lads and lasses going off into the Blue for mad adventures? Anything from climbing trees to visiting elves or sailing in ships, sailing to other shores (p. 14)!" The "Blue" here could be taken as an allusion to the Ered Luin (S.

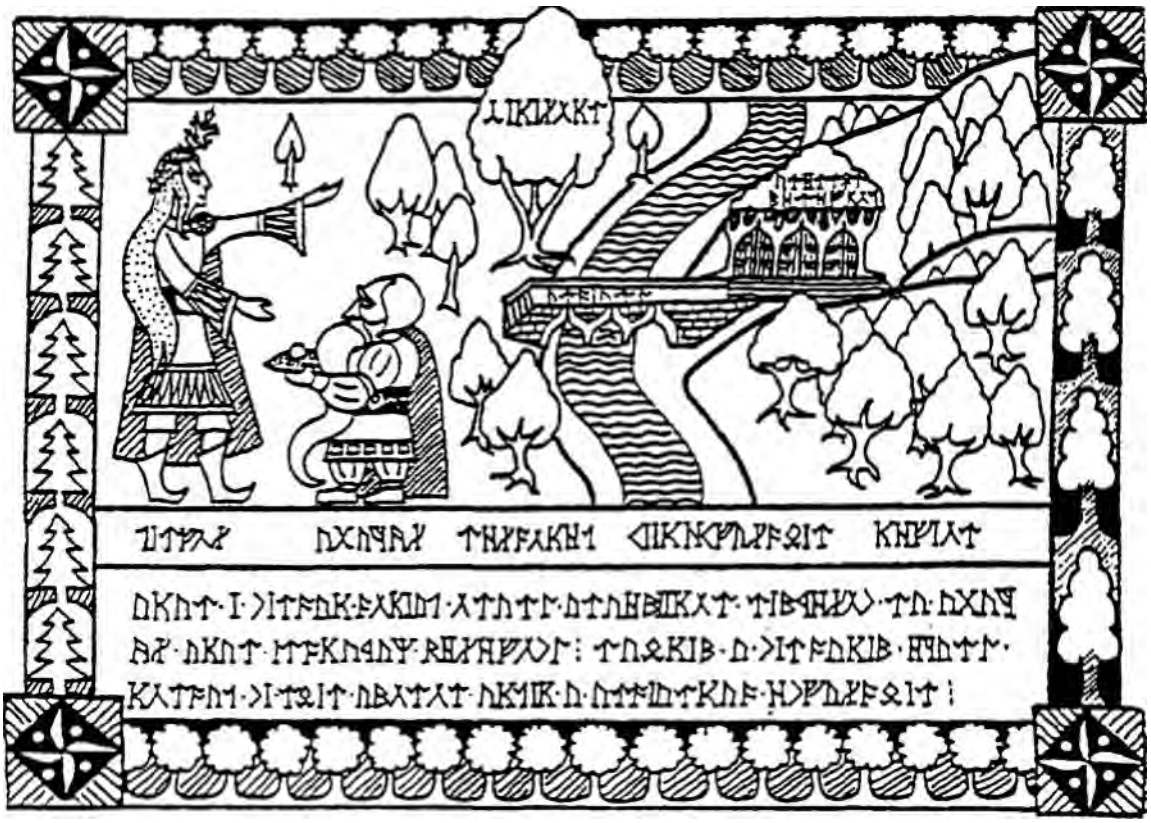


Blue Mountains) or to the River Lune; "elves" probably refers specifically to the Eldar and "ships" to those in the Mithond. This may be compared with what is stated in "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil" (pp. 191-251 in *The Tolkien Reader* New York: Ballantine, 1966): "there were certainly… traditions concerning Hobbits that were taken by the 'wandering-madness', and if they ever returned, were afterwards queer and uncommunicable (p. 194)." These Hobbits going into the "Blue" for their adventures may have encountered Elves in Lindon, since the sea lies in the same direction as Lindon.

Lastly, *Unfinished Tales* contains a reference to the Elves of Lindon in a passage concerning the Men inhabiting the "dark woods of the great Cape of Eryn Vorn [the peninsula just south of Harlindon], south of the mouth of the Baranduin, which they dared not cross, even if they could, for fear of the Elvenfolk (UT 262-263)." This is one of the very rare isolated references to the Elvish habitation of Harlindon.

Conclusion

The Fourth Age presents many opportunities for encounters with the Eldar, whether in a small settlement like Rivendell or in a larger region like Lindon. Why, there are even enough Elves around in the Fourth Age to make a sequel to the interesting (if one were ever written, that is)!



Religion in Middle-earth

How does it work and what does it do?

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Religion is a standard feature of fantasy role-playing universes. If we broadly define religion as creed *(what people believe),* code *(what people value). and* cultus *(how people express beliefs and values through ritual), then we can usually discern its presence as a factor in most role-playing games. But this definition may he too broad; for most people, creed and code only become "religious" when they are organized and controlled by a particular group of people (i.e. a church, a cult, or some other kind of association which specifically defines itself as religious, as distinct from other kinds of groups — political, kinship, or whatever).*

Is there religion in Middle-earth? Both literary critics and game designers alike have managed to generate a lot of confusion in attempting to answer this question. There are two reasons for this lack of clarity. The first is a failure to correctly interpret Tolkien's own statements on the matter as a result of failing in turn to distinguish between Tolkien's understanding of the "religious" function of fantasy as literature, *and references (or lack thereof) to creed / code / cultus in Middle-earth as material for* role-playing games. *The second reason for confusion is due to the fact that most people who write about religion in Tolkien's world (whether as literature or as an FRP setting) fail to make explicit what definition of religion they are using (e.g. Do they mean creed. code, or cultus — or some combination of the three?). By attending to both of these factors, this essay will attempt to give this question a clear and straightforward answer.*

If there is religion in Middle-earth, what does it do? Reading a fantasy novel is a contemplative activity; but a fantasy role-playing game is fundamentally oriented towards doing something. *This means that role-players are concerned with cause and effect relationships — i.e, "If religion exists, how might it concretely affect my character?" Because religion typically claims access to power of some sort, a role-player needs to know whether and under what circumstances that power is effective — i.e. "If my character participates in religious activity, will that have an impact on my rolls?" In other words, does religion actually affect game mechanics, or is it just nice to look at?*

If religion in Middle-earth "works", then how does it work? Most game designers live in a culture in which religion is conceived of as being universally available to anyone with the subjective attitude of "faith". This model often ends up distorting the way religion operates in Tolkien's world. Consequently, in order to develop a more accurate model of religion for role-playing in Middle-earth, it will be necessary to *look for more appropriate analogies than those based upon our own culture.*

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This essay attempts to answer these questions in *the following way: 1) it interprets Tolkien's own remarks about religion in Middle-earth, 2) it develops a model of religion based upon historical analogies from our own world, and 3) it fleshes out this model with concrete examples taken from Tolkien's works.*

Middle-earth as a "Religious" World

J.R.R. Tolkien was a devout Roman Catholic, and on one occasion he described *The Lord of the Rings* (the *magnum opus* of his mythology) as "a fundamentally religious and Catholic work" *(Letters*: 172). What does this statement mean? Certainly it means that the personal beliefs and values of an author play a role in shaping the kind of stories he or she writes; but in order to understand Tolkien's specific meaning, one must refer to his philosophy of fantasy.

In his essay "On Fairy-stories", Tolkien defined the task of the fantasy writer as the creation of myth (*Tree and Leaf*: 64-66). For Tolkien, myth is something that poetically *illuminates* fundamental human truths; but it does this in a way quite different from allegory which, by contrast, *advertises* the explicit content of the author's creed. His rejection of allegory is claimed by Tolkien as the reason "why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like 'religion', to cults or practices, in the imaginary world (*Letters*: ibid)".

When Tolkien states that he has intentionally eliminated any references to "religion", what he means is that he has avoided inserting any representations of *Christian* cultus into his imaginary world. This is a necessary consequence of his rejection of fantasy as allegory. This statement does *not*, however, imply that Middle-earth lacks religious practices. Nor docs it imply that the central tenants of Tolkien's own creed — the unity of God, the reality of divine grace, and the fallenness of humanity — are not fundamental *facts* within the secondary world.

But all of this only deals with Tolkien's mythology as *literature*; it does not ultimately help us to imagine how religion in Middle-earth works *as a game setting.* Tolkien's claim to have eliminated "anything like religion" from his world should immediately caution us against importing assumptions about religion as we know it in our own culture into our gaming. Graham Staplehurst's passing treatment of religion in Iron Crown's *Minas Tirith* city module (Cities of Middle-earth #8301) serves to illustrate this danger.

Staplehurst refers to religion as "spiritual life"(20-21), though he never states what he means by this expression. Implicitly, however, he defines "spiritual" in opposition to cultus; that is, as the opposite of "ceremony and show":

> The religious observances of the Dúnedain... are uniformly informal. There are no temples or shrines and no priest may preach or conduct any form of service... Similarly there are no religious services or teachings (20).

While at first glance this passage sounds very similar to Tolkien's own remark, Staplehurst counterbalances this negative statement with an affirmative which, I believe, reflects "modern" religious assumptions which do not correspond to the role of religion in Tolkien's world. According to Staplehurst, a personal, contemplative relationship with one of the Valar for the achievement of "blessing" is the spiritual ideal of the "fervent" Dúnadan:

> The benefits of blessing are not provable, but the simple act of faith in saying prayers may be sufficient to channel some power from the Valar in order to influence events concerning the person who prays. Naturally, prayers arc ofno use to those who have no faith (21).

This passage seems to suggest that "spiritual life" means meditative (and, perhaps, occasionally ritualized) activity concerning the "faith" of an individual person. If blessing is wholly dependent upon subjective belief, it is no wonder that collective, institutionalized expressions of cultus would be uniformally ineffective and hence useless. In other words, all good Dúnedain are Calvinists to a man.

But Tolkien himself used the term "faith" in quite a different way. In the secondary world, to have faith is to be one of the Faithful — that is, the subject of a realm. The "faith" of the Faithful is based not upon unsubstantiated subjective belief, but upon history and an objective loyalty based upon it. The solidarity of the Faithful is expressed not through individual meditation, but through certain persons, places and objects endowed with the quality of holiness.

Holiness as a Model for How Religion Works

Holiness is not a "spiritual" matter — it is a physical characteristic which invests its holder with the objective power to bless and curse, to destroy life or to save it. The healing hand of the true king is one example of holiness, as is Isildur's objectively effective curse against the Oathbreakers. Similarly, the shadow of the Lord of the Nazgûl is an example of "negative" holiness or corruption. Both forms of holiness are contractable through physical contact and are therefore "contagious."

The Faithful enter into a relationship with holy persons, places and things through a *highly* institutionalized cultus, the performance of which is more often than not the exclusive "right" of a single individual — the king. From this perspective, the capacity "to be religious" in any recognizable sense is concomitant not upon the will or disposition of the individual person, but is rather "given" to one by virtue of one's blood-lineage, or by some special grace independent of personal merit. In this sense, "religion" is transmitted not by "faith," but by *kin-*

ship. The organization and transmission of holiness, then, is our mode] for how religion in Middle-earth *works.*

Because holiness resides in physical things, reflection upon the nature of holiness and all activity directed towards it will be eminently "thisworldly" in orientation. Because holiness is located "inside" kinship and political structures, there exists no motivational basis for withdrawal from these structures in order to embrace holiness. Hence, there are no "priests" in Middle-earth — there arc only kings and leaders who fulfill priestly functions.

Much of this eludes Staplehurst's treatment of religion in *the Minas Tirith* module, in which he refers (for example) to the wardens of the Hallows as otherworldly monastics who have taken "vows of priesthood" (114, 134, 135). His consistent usage of explicitly religious language in describing their head as a "curate" compounds the contradiction of his earlier statement that the Dúnedain possess no formalized religious discourse.

It would appear, then, that *cultus* abounds in Middle-earth, but that it is not really helpful to call it religious since it exists coterminously with "non-religious" institutions. By jettisoning our modem notions about religion, we can view cultus or ritual as the way in which kinship and political institutions *organize, bestow,* and *transmit* holiness. But the power to bless and curse has a much more specific function with respect to the group which organizes it, and that function we shall designate as *cult.*

"Cult" as the Model for What Religion Docs

A cult is set of ritual performances which transmits holiness for the explicit purpose of legitimating a particular kind of rule over others. A cult *is* therefore "political" in the broad sense of exercising authority over a body of people. In terms of our earlier definition of religion, cult embraces cultus proper (ritual), *code* (a form of rule over others), and *creed* (beliefs which legitimate both the validity of the cult itself and of its form of rule). Some forms of rule literally cannot exist without the support of a cult, while others have no need of cultic legitimation. Cults arc generally not invented by their participants, but are instead initiated by one or more of the Valar as an intervention of divine grace. Accordingly, the continuing effectiveness of a cult depends not upon the subjective belief of its participants, but upon the Power that initiated it.

The only two fully developed examples of cults in Tolkien's writings are those practiced by the Dúnedain, and those imposed by Morgoth and Sauron over their slaves. The cult of Melkor as it developed in Númenor under Sauron's influence represents a hybrid of the two. What is striking about this is that it suggests that (at least among the Free Peoples) cults are largely a *human* phenomenon. Why cults, in the specific sense in which we have defined them, did not emerge among Hobbits, Dwarves or Elves is a question which may assist in further defining the nature of cult in Middle-earth.

Throughout Tolkien's writings, the patriarchal household as the dominant model of kinship appears to be self-validating and, hence, not in need of cultic legitimation. It would follow from this that peoples for whom kinship is the primary form of social organization would not be "graced" with cults. This logic would seem to hold in the case of Hobbits, whose only "extra-familial" jurisdiction (the Shire) is elective and therefore not derived from divine intervention.

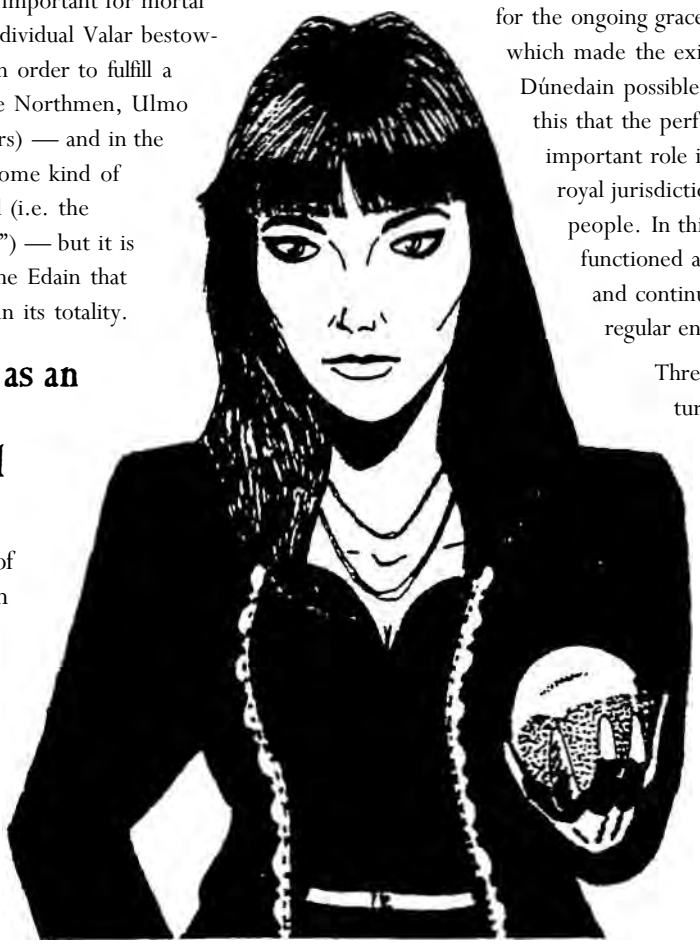
Dwarves, on the other hand, have a direct connection to the vala Aulë; but any ritual celebration of that relationship would be redundant as far as cult is concerned, since such ritual practices would signify nothing more than a reiteration and affirmation of their own created nature. The prominence of the kinship principle in defining the social organization of the Dwarves (e.g, the seven fathers) certainly involves an element of holiness, but

it does not necessarily serve the specifically *cultic* function of legitimating a novel form of association above and beyond that of kinship.

Elves are a more complicated case. Like Dwarves, they enjoy a special relationship to one of the Valar and, similarly, reverence for Elbereth is an expression of their essential being; but the Elves are unable to engage in genuine cultic activity while they are in Middle-earth. The reason for this is that the Valar have already defined a context for Even cultic participation in Aman (e.g. the celebratory worship of Ilúvatar in concert with the Valar), the point being that Elves (at least in the view of the Powers) do not belong in Middle-earth and, unlike the mortal exiles from Númenor, have the free option of departing into the West whenever they like.

There is little evidence of either the Valar or Maiar endorsing the Elves' refusal to submit to the direct rule of the Powers in Aman. Melian might be seen as an exception to this pattern, but at least part of Thingol's influence over the Grey Elves stemmed from his having seen the Blessed Realm himself. Again, both this and his marriage to Melian made him a focus of holiness, but that did not lead to a different kind of social order legitimated by cultic ritual.

If cult in our specific sense is unnecessary for Elves, Dwarves and Hobbits, then why is it so important for mortal Men? There are instances of individual Valar bestowing grace upon human beings in order to fulfill a *particular* need (e.g, Araw to the Northmen, Ulmo to Tuor, Uinen to the Venturers) — and in the case of one of these instances some kind of cultic association was instituted (i.e. the Uinendili organized as a "guild") — but it is only with the three houses of the Edain that the nature of cult first unfolds in its totality.



The Numenoreans as an Example of a Cultically Defined People

Prior to the gift of the Isle of the Star, it seems that the Edain of Beleriand observed no ditinctive cult. The alliances forged with the Elves possessed a rational, non-cultic, basis (i.e. survival and united defense against the threat of Morgoth). This situation changes with the end of the First Age.

As reward for their loyal opposition to Angband, the three houses were given a new dwelling place under the protection of the Valar. In accepting this divine grace, the Edain became a new people: the Dúnedain. The Valar appointed Elros Tar-Minyatur and his descendants to rule over this people as kings. The primary function of these kings was to exercise a new land of rule over the three houses and to act as priestly mediators between their people and the Powers.

This new form of jurisdiction was called Númenórean law. It is unclear to what extent it was directly constituted by the will of the Valar, and to what degree the individual Númenórean kings had the capacity to shape its content; but one thing is clear: its emergence went hand in hand with the first genuine appearance of a cult. This was the annual offering of first fruits to God upon the holy mountain of the island:

> But in the midst of the land was a mountain tall and steep, and it was named the Meneltarma, the Pillar of Heaven, and upon it was a high place that was hallowed to Eru Ilúvatar, and it was open and unroofed, and no other temple or fane was there in the land of the Númernóreans (*Silmarillion*: 261).

This ritual offering (and the consequences of its subsequent abandonment by the later kings) implies that the exclusive priestly mediation of the line of Elros was necessary for the ongoing grace and protection of the Valar which made the existence of the Edain as Dúnedain possible. It would seem to follow from this that the performance of the cult played an important role in validating the exercise of royal jurisdiction over Númenor and its people. In this capacity, Númenorean law functioned as a covenant whose integrity and continuity was guaranteed by the regular enactment of cult.

Three historical developments ruptured this original covenant: 1) the cult of the dead, 2) the cult of Melkor, and 3) the Akallabêth. Each of these developments had important social and political consequence for how the Dúnedain related to the Lesser Men of Middle-earth. Cultic identity probably played a role in the self-understanding and motivation of their early interaction, the Númenóreans acting as indi-

rect mediators of grace towards those coastal peoples oppressed by Sauron; but this initial contact did not have any repercussions on the claims of Dúnadan rule until the kings began to murmer against the Ban of the Valar.

The gradual estrangement of the greater part of the Dúnedain from the Valar and the Eldar as a consequence of the former's preoccupation with death led to the development of elaborate funerary ritual:

> But the fear of death grew ever darker upon them, and they delayed it by all means that they could; and they began to build great houses for their dead... and they filled all the land with silent tombs in which the thought of death was enshrined in the darkness. But those that lived turned the more eagerly to pleasure and revelry, desiring ever more goods and more riches; and after the days of Tar-Ancalimon the offering of the first fruits to Eru was neglected, and men went seldom anymore to the Hallow upon the heights of Meneltarma in the midst of the land (*Silmarillion*: 266).

This passage establishes a correspondance between the preoccupation with death, the accumulation of wealth, and the neglect of the Meneltarma cult, though it does not imply that they are causally related in any direct way. Nevertheless, this development of funerary practice might legitimately be viewed as a cult (as Tolkien himself refers to it upon occasion in the *Letters*), since it seems to serve as a justification for the accumulation of wealth, which can only be achieved by the exploitation of Middle-earth and the exaction of tribute from its inhabitants. One possible reason for the corresponding abandonment of the Meneltarma cult may very well have been because the Númenóreans were unable to invoke it as a legitimation for their domination of Lesser Men (upon which their extravagent lifestyle now depended).

To what extent the veneration of the dead actually contributed to legitimating these tributary relations is not specified; but it is an apt illustration of our model, since the cult emerges in close proximity to this novel development in relations between Númenor and Middle-earth. It is also unknown to what extent tribute was incorporated within the sphere of Númenórean law. This depends upon how we choose to view the relationship between that law and the performance of the traditional Númenórean cultus. The closer cult and jurisdiction are to one another, the more problematic it would be to incorporate such tribute as a "legal" activity. Conversely, the more detatchable jurisdiction is from divine cult, the easier it would be to incorporate the new mode of domination.

Perhaps the division of the Dúnedain into the two parties of the Faithful and the King's Men intimates that the correspondence between cult and jurisdiction was ambiguous enough to allow for diverging interpretations without, thereby, threatening the ultimate basis of the king's legitimacy. At the same time, the lack of divine endorsement of unjustified "secular" tribute would generate the need (or at least, the desirability) for a secondary cultic institution. The kinship character of ritual practices focused upon the preservation of one's dead relatives could be interpreted as a hybrid phenomenon, since it falls back upon a "pre-cultic" focus of legitimation (i.e, the patriarchal household as self-validating structure) to justify the accumulation of wealth.

The most distinguishing characteristic of Morgoth, and later Sauron's, rule is slavery. In Tolkien's mythology, the enslavement of one of the Free Peoples by another is unheard of except "under the shadow". This suggests that slavery cannot be validated except by means of a cult centered upon Morgoth himself (Tolkien once stated that, during the Third Age, Sauron presented himself to his servants as Morgoth redivivus.). Such was the case with Númenor, wherein the outright enslavement (as distinct from tributary servitude) of the peoples of Middle-earth commences only after Sauron institutes the cult of Melkor among the Dúnedain:

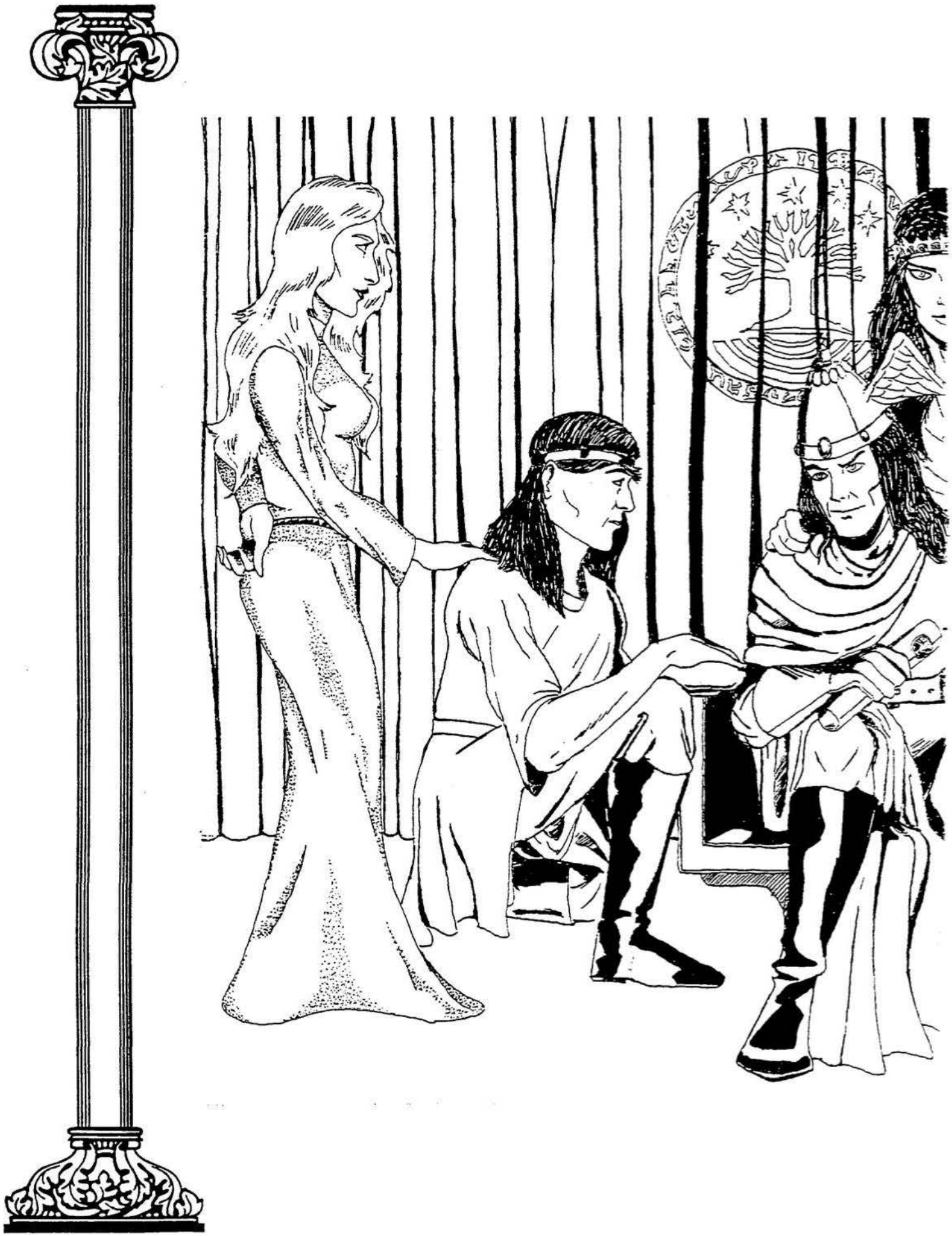
> And they sailed now with power and armoury to Middle-earth, and they came no longer as bringers of gifts, nor even as rulers, but as fierce men of war. And they hunted the men of Middle-earth and took their goods and enslaved them, and many they slew cruelly upon their alters (*Silmarillion*: 274).

This is the clearest testimony to our contention that one of the primary functions of cult is to make possible a particular form of rule or domination which cannot be sustained by any other means. It is also significant that the only occasion in which actual slaves appear in *The Lord of the Rings* is during Aragorn's defeat of the Corsairs of Umbar at Pelargir (Umbar being the traditional locus for the descendants of the "Black Númenóreans", and now once more under Sauron's dominion).

But the cult of Melkor as practiced by the Númenóreans also illustrates the problem of the *efficacy* of cultic performance. Again, because the effectiveness of ritual depends not upon subjective belief, but upon the divine source of its power to bless and curse, a cult premised upon false claims to efficacy (i.e. Melkor's promise of deathlessness to the Dúnedain) will encounter perennial difficulties in maintaining its semblance of authority. In other words, the problem with such cults is that *they do not work* — at least not entirely in the way that their mediators claim. Accordingly, they must rely upon deception or naked coercion in order to enforce any kind of rule based upon them.

The Downfall of the Land of Gift and the opening of the Great Rift by the hand of God signifies a termination of the covenant guaranteed by the performance of the Meneltarma cult.

— *continued on page 14*



The foundation of the realms-in-exile by the remnant of the Faithful reconstituted elements of both the worship of God and the cult of the dead in a new form, based upon both tradition and necessity. Its successful preservation of certain holy artifacts of the old covenant (e.g. the White Tree) was interpreted as a continuing channel of grace from the now otherworldly Valar (Aman having been separated from Arda by the Rift).

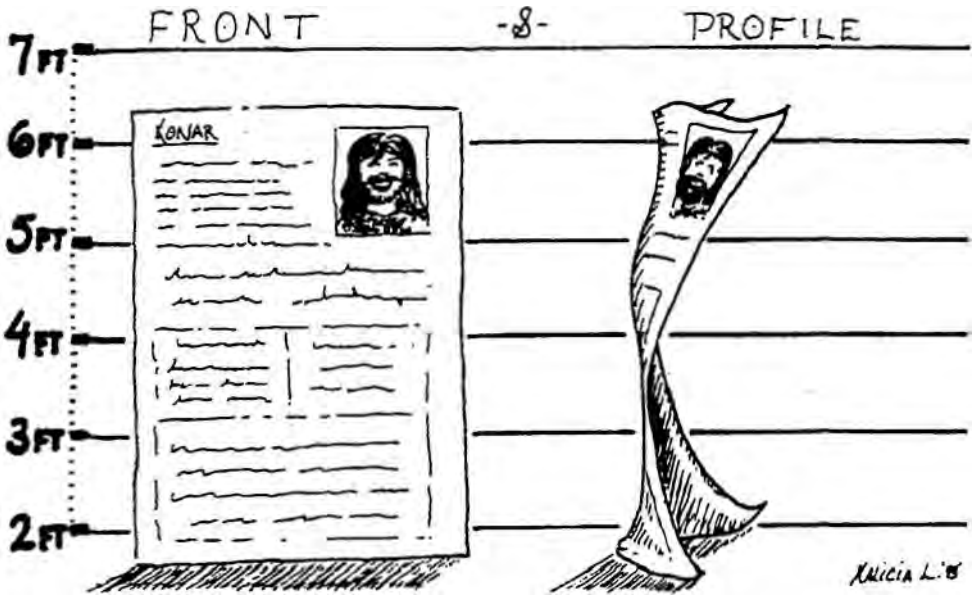
Summary

Religion in Middle-earth manifests itself primarily as ritual activity for the purpose of transmitting holiness (the power to bless and curse). Rituals become a cult when they serve to legitimate a form of rule, especially a form of rule which cannot be legitimated and sustained by any other means (i.e. slavery). The Dúnedain are the only one of the Free Peoples to have had a fully developed cult in this sense. The cult of Melkor took elements from the traditional Númenórean cult (e.g. the Dúnedain as a chosen people, the funerary cult) and combined them with Sauron's own slavery ideology. The continued effectiveness of Númenórean cult as practiced by the Faithful in Middle-earth attests to the continued grace of God/the Valar.

The phenomenon of cult does not in itself have an impact upon game mechanics; rather, it is the general principle of Holiness which must be expressed in quantitative terms by a game system *in order* for religion (and other uses of such power) to be "real." The *Runequest* statistic of Power (POW), for instance, serves this function by quantifying the relative magnitude of potential holiness residing in a person, place, or object. In order to adapt itself to Tolkien's world, such a statistic would have to be qualified according to the principles which give access to it (i.e. blood-lineage, direct divine grace, etc.). OH

Character Profile

Jeff Hatch: 60 Crescent Lane Novato, CA 94947 USA [with assistance from Chris Seeman]



In an effort to acquaint itself with some of the more colorful personalities to befound in Middle-earth, Other Hands' *1640s corespondent, Oxrandir (venerable loremaster from Minas Tirith and president of the eminent Gondorian Historiographical Society), has taken it upon himself to make the journey to a rather important trade conference being held in the city of Tharbad; and there to interview one of the most unlikely prime movers of such an event: King Konar of Dor-en-Gurth.*

The name probably doesn't ring a bell. Most of our readers have never even heard of a place called "Dor-en-Gurth" (S. Land of Death — charming, isn't it?). But this is not surprising, for our interviewee's self-styled title and territory are both recent acquisitions, and have only achieved widespread recognition on the occasion of the present trade conference. Nevertheless, through long trials and obscurity, Konar has become a force to be reckoned with in world affairs. His story is asfascinating as the man himself.

Konar is afull-blooded Estaravi Northmanfrom the upper vales of Anduin, who left his homeland to seek hisfortune in the wide world. His resume reveals the many incarnations he had to pass through before becoming what he is today — barbarian, bartender, cook, comedian, sailor, seamaster, thief, mutineer, rogue, captain, lord and, finally, king "by his own hand". While admitting that his tale has had its imitators throughout past andfuture history, our interviewee contends that he *is the originator of the well-known hero pattern. Despite the universality of "his" archetype, Konar's story is firmly rooted in the particularities of the 1640s of the Third Age, as our corespondent was soon to discover.*

— continued next page

We turn now to the site of the interview. Oxrandir is seated in a tastefully designed reception chamber located somewhere within the conference facilities in Tharbad. Konar sits across from him in his "portable throne"; not overly pretentious, but distinct enough to mark his claim to fame. He sips a glass of fine wine during this brief respite from the proceedings of the conference. Oxrandir has never interviewed "royalty" before, and appears to be a bit tense, but "the King" quickly breaks the ice with characteristic levity.

Oxrandir: Do you mind if I smoke?

Konar: What — you want I should douse you in oil and light a match? Ha! Now that's funny!

Oxrandir: [laughing] Well, your majesty — or may I call you Konar?

Konar: You can call me whatever you like, as long as it looks good in print.

Oxrandir: Fine. Let's make things simple and keep it just Konar.

Konar: Go for it.

Oxrandir: Well, I suppose the first thing our readers would like to know is how it all began — I mean, from cook to king is a pretty big career change.

Konar: Yes it is. But it just goes to show that you can't keep a good barbarian down — at least that's what I've always said. Anyway, I guess it all began about twenty years ago when I decided to leave mom and dad up north and see the world.

Oxrandir: What made you decide to leave?

Konar: Boredom, mostly. Nothing much happens up there in the mountains. I mean, sure, you have to deal with Orcs and wargs sometimes, but they're not much of a challenge.

Oxrandir: But what about Angmar and the Witch-king? Isn't it true that his realm lies on both sides of the Misty Mountains?

Konar: Yeah, he's a real pain in the ass; but he never bothered much about us — we lived far enough south of Gundalok to avoid most of his cronies.

Oxrandir: I see.

Konar: Anyway, as I was saying, things were getting a bit too dull for me up there, so I packed my bags and made for Maethelburg on the River.

Oxrandir: Is that where you became a bartender?

Konar: No, that was later. I started out as a cook, and worked my way up to bartender (if you know what I mean). So, eventually I made my way downriver and came to this outlaw town called Strayhold. There I met some other Northmen who were on their way to Gondor — heard that the king needed mercenaries for the war with the Corsairs of Umbar.

Oxrandir: So that's how you came to join the navy.

Konar: For a little while; but I got tired of getting paid shit wages for fighting pirates and all.

Oxrandir: Where were you stationed?

Konar: On Tolfalas. We were sent from Pelargir with this captain to patrol the straits against the Laughing Reaver.

Oxrandir; The name is not familiar to me.

Konar: That's because the Reaver laughs no more — not after we got through with him. But I'm getting ahead of myself in the story. In any case, the Reaver was the leader of the Pirates of the Red Cliffs [the coastline of the Harad immediately south of the River Harnen], and had been causing trouble for the king.

Oxrandir: But you yourself also got into some kind of trouble with Gondor, if I'm not mistaken.

Konar: Well, you see, what happened was that some of my friends and I were on patrol one day and came across some of these pirates burying their ill-gotten goods on Tolfalas. After disposing with them, we decided to...err...keep the treasure for ourselves as "compensation," and figured that it was time to leave the navy.

Oxrandir: So you took the money and ran.

Konar: Well, yes; but we also needed a ship to get off the island, so we attempted a mutiny.

Oxrandir; Which failed.

Konar: Because of a traitor who had been placed in our midst to warn the captain! And he got his just deserts later.

Oxrandir: But you *were* arrested and tried.

Konar: In Pelargir, yeah. But we *did* escape, thank you very much.

Oxrandir: Of course. But what made you decide to turn to Umbar? I mean, you as a Northman could surely not expect to get very far in Corair society.

Konar: We were afraid of that too, at first; but as it turned out we found ourselves in the right place at the right time. You see, Castamir's widow, Mûrabêth, had a grudge against that floating fat man, Borathôr [one of the chief captains of Umbar], who had secretly made friends with the Pirates of the Red Cliffs as a way of getting extra cash into his coffers. Mûrabêth wanted to expose Borathôr's alliance and to further embarrass him by having a nobody (like me) take over the Laughing Reaver's operation. So we went in there and took his castle, exterminating all of the pirates who refused to surrender.

Oxrandir: So the vicinity of the Red Cliffs became "Dor-en-Gurth?"

Konar: Yeah, I got the idea from one of my companions, who had this pet iguana that he carried on his shoulder and called Turion-o-Gurth (S. Master of Death). We did it kind'a as a joke. We renamed the Reaver's castle "Ostogurth", and made our banner a green iguana on a red field.

Oxrandir: And the rest is history?

Konar: Well, there was a lot that happened in between. We made friends with the local Haradan tribes and helped to mediate their disputes. Eventually, things got too hot in Umbar, and Borathôr tried to assume control over the other captains, so they called me in to remedy the situation since I had the support of the Haradrim.

Oxrandir: And you dethroned Borathôr?

Konar: 1 "de-headed" him actually.

Oxrandir: I see...

Konar: Everyone was so happy with me that they decided to confirm me as "king of the Haradrim."

Oxrandir: That's a pretty high promotion.

Konar; Well, the Corsairs have never been too strong on land, so they figured it would be easier to leave the defense of Harnen to somebody more competent.

Oxrandir: But how were the men of the Harad persuaded to submit themselves to your rule — you, a foreigner?

Konar: Maybe they thought I was a nice guy (just kidding). Well, its not as if there aren't any precedents — take Fuinur and Herumor, for example. They were Dúnedain, but they ruled over Haradrim territory.

Oxrandir: But what's the secret to your success?

Konar: Well, you see, it's all in the reputation. Whenever

I confront an enemy, he usually knows that all who face me either join me or die. The intelligent ones choose the former.

Oxrandir: Have you ever considered a career in world domination if, as you claim, your reputation is so effective?

Konar: World domination? Nah, I'm quite content with being king over my own little corner of the world.

Oxrandir: But your presence here at this trade conference suggests that you are not wholly unconcerned with the fate of the outside world.

Konar: Well, that goes without saying.

Oxrandir: Konar, tell our readers about how you got involved in this undertaking.

Konar: Hmm...that's a long story, but I can give you the short version.

Oxrandir: Go right ahead.

Konar: Well, it all started a couple of years ago when a series of events brought myself and some of my friends from Umbar and Gondor to the southern realms — beyond Far Harad.

Oxrandir: Sorry, you still have friends in Gondor?

Konar: Call them "former acquaintances" if you like. In any case, we were united against a common enemy: the Storm King.

Oxrandir: I find it extremely interesting that this "shadow in the south" chooses to be known by this name. Do you think there could be a relationship between this Storm King in the south and our own Witch-king in the north?

Konar: You mean whether they might be somehow related, like two extensions of some single power and will directed against the survivors of Númenor?

Oxrandir: Exactly.

Konar: Nah, I think it's just coincidence.

Oxrandir: You're right, Konar; that would be too obvious.

Konar: Well, let me get back to my story, so that I can finish it before the negotiations resume. Now, where was I?

Oxrandir: Uh... you had just traveled into the far south on some kind of errand against the Storm King.

Konar: Yeah, yeah, that's right. Anyway, the upshot of it was that we made some mutual friends down there and invited them to renew trade with the north. Now, as we ail know, Gondor and the lords of Umbar arc at war and do not recognize each other's legitimacy. My own kingdom lies on land claimed by the king of Gondor, so we had to think of some third party who could provide a "neutral zone" where we could all participate in this new trade.

Oxrandir: And a more open trade is certainly needed.

Konar: Arthedain is in desperate need of grain to feed its starving, landless masses, and it needs more weapons for its fight against Angmar. Umbar can provide both; and in turn it can receive timber and raw materials from Eriador for the construction of new ships.

Oxrandir: And what do *you* need, Konar?

Konar: Well, like I already said, I'm pretty self-sufficient in my own little niche of the world; but I see myself as being able to offer the service of protecting this expanded trade route from Umbar to Tharbad.

Oxrandir: Which would undoubtedly bring greater security to your own continued control of Dor-en-Gurth, sandwiched as it is between the two great "superpowers" of Belfalas Bay.

Konar: Aha! You're very perceptive. I like that... Say, Oxrandir; ever thought of joining up with me and the gang at Ostogurth?

Oxrandir: ...do I have a choice?

Konar: Ha, ha, ha! Now that's funny! I'm just pulling your leg!

Oxrandir: [laughing, but with a tinge of nervous relief] Thank the Valar!

Konar: Like I was saying, all of the representatives gathered here — from Arthedain, Gondor, Umbar, myself, the southern realms, and what's left of Cardolan — hope to agree on Tharbad as our neutral port for this new trade network. And who

knows, maybe it can become the basis for future peace negotiations between Umbar and Gondor?

Oxrandir: Yeah, right! And monkeys might fly out of my butt.

Konar: *Never* underestimate what a barbarian is capable of.

Oxrandir: After this conversation is over I certainly shant underestimate their delusions of grandeur.

Konar: Well, any more questions?

Oxrandir: How do you want to be remembered?

Konar: Hmm... It's interesting that you pose that question to me at this juncture, Oxrandir. I mean, I'm probably going to be remembered more for this interview and the conference than for anything I ever did previously. But for the record, you can quote this: I don't know anything about the way the Dúnadan mind works — I'm a barbarian — but what I *do* know is that Dorwinion wine is a better solution to our problems than playing trollball over a cup of *miruvor*.

Oxrandir: I can't argue with that!

Konar (RQ3 stats)

STR: 18 CON: 18 SIZ: 16 INT: 10
POW: 16 DEX: 20 APP: 13
DEX SRM: 1 + SIZ SRM: 1 = MELEE SRM: 2
Magic Points: 16 Fatigue Points: 36-22 ENC = 14

Weapon	SR	A%(+14)	Damage	P% (+7)	AP	Range
Greatsword	3	88	2D8 (+ 1D6)	73	12	—
Knife	5	43	1D4+2 (+1D6)	25	6	—
Heavy Cestus*	5	80	1D3+2 (+1D6)	40	8	—
Kick	5	42	1D6 (+1D6)	—	—	—
Whip**	1/MR	86	ID4 (+1D3)	—	—	5

*Konar's cestus is enchanted with Ironhand 2, giving him + 10% attack/parry and + 2 damage.
** Konar's whip enables him to subdue and command an enemy upon contact. The target must resist vs 19 POW to overcome this.

SKILLS: Boat 15, Climb 65, Dodge 76, Jump 63, Ride 22, Swim 30, Throw 64, Fast Talk 58, Orate 26, Speak Estaravi 31, Speak Westron 31, Speak Haradaic 31, Cooking 56, Sewing 56, First Aid 41, Read/Write Westron 53, Shiphandling 14, World Lore 34, Conceal 44, Devise 21, Sleight 21, Listen 82, Scan 84, Search 55, Track 47, Hide 25, Sneak 34

Hit Points:	17	
R Leg:	6	(3 pt cuirbouilli greave)
L Leg:	6	(3 pt cuirbouilli greave)
Abdomen:	6	(7 pt chainmail hauberk)
Chest:	8	(7 pt chainmail hauberk)
R Arm:	5	(7 pt chainmail sleeve)
L Arm:	5	(7 pt chainmail sleeve)
Head:	6	(8 pt steel helm)

OB

Arda in a distant mirror:

Some problems of RPG design in Tolkien's world

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Despite the fact that they often deal in similar genres, literary fiction and role-playing games are very different modes of artistic expression. For instance, while the modern novel privileges the inner development of its characters, role-playing necessarily emphasizes externalized problem-solving and interpersonal action. To capture the overall feel of a literary world through the medium of role-playing therefore requires a certain skill in translation, which may very well result in a product distinctly different from the original literary work. For no author is this more true than for Tolkien.

It is always problematic to work within a secondary world created by someone else. In the case of Middle-earth, there are two complicating factors. The first and most significant is that, unlike the worlds of other living authors where new primary materials are forthcoming (e.g. *Thieves' World*), J.R.R. Tolkien is unavailable for further comment, while his son and posthumous editor, Christopher, is completely uninterested in the existing role-playing spin-offs based upon his father's work.

The second problem in translating Tolkien's stories into gaming material is that many aspects of his world which would be of great importance to RPG design (e.g. the workings of magic) are left largely undescribed or only hinted at. The same goes for adventure settings, where the most rewarding source materials exist precisely for those settings (e.g. the Shire, Rohan and Gondor during the War of the Ring) which may be of least interest to the

—*continued next page*

gamemaster because of their constrains on individual leeway for player-character action. Conversely, earlier settings with better campaign opportunities are less well-described by Tolkien (*Unfinished Tales* in particular contains some valuable essays, while other useful information can be sifted from *The Letters* and *The Silmarillion*.).

Confronted with these initial obstacles, the prospective RPG writer must begin with the extant texts, draw analogies from suitably parallel phenomena in the primary world, and invest (largely) original material with the approximation of a Tolkienian style. In other words, if Tolkien's world is a secondary creation, what is called for is "tertiary" creation on the part of the game designer.

Consider the Third Age as a potential game setting. In order to avoid a monolithic "Free Peoples vs. Sauron" complex *a la* the War of the Ring, a temporal setting must be chosen in which widespread turbulence may be combined with an equally wide scope for independence of player-character action. While Iron Crown has chosen to emphasise the 1640s, in which western Endor is preoccupied with recovery from the Great Plague, I myself prefer the 15th century (which includes both the Witch-king's invasion of Eriador and the Kin-strife in Gondor), and the 19th and 20th centuries (which see the lengthy Wainrider wars). All three of these settings share in common a limited treatment by Tolkien in "Appendix A" of *The Lord of the Rings*, whose skeletal outline of their background affords the RPG designer a generous degree of autonomy — something most designers enjoy.

To achieve a successful tertiary creation in the RPG medium, the central themes and conceptions of its originating structure — the literary world of the author — must be present. These themes and conceptions must, of course, be modified and developed, but they ought not to be substituted for material completely foreign to those of the original author. This tension may be illustrated by Iron Crown's usage of primary world analogies for the development of Middle-earth RPG settings.

The creative use of "real-world" analogies upon which much of Iron Crown's work has been based is certainly not, in principle, foreign to Tolkien's own creative process. For instance, just as Tolkien had the Rohirrim speak Anglo-Saxon, so Iron Crown has patterned the culture of the Dunlendings off of that of the archaic Celts. But where the latter has chosen to develop settings located beyond the confines of Tolkien's own map, the quality of the content has decreased notably and the Tolkienian flavor is lost, leaving the consumer with a generic "sword and sorcery" setting. For example, when I read the ICE modules *Shadow in the South* or *Greater Harad,* I have no feeling of being inside Tolkien's world (unlike when I read a module like *Thieves of Tharbad*).

Because of the inherent limitations of Tolkien's world discussed above, and the need to remain true to its central themes and conceptions, it may prove necessary to turn to other sources for inspiration (I have often found the plot constructions of Arthur Conan Doyle's short stories to be useful in designing detective-style adventures set in Middle-earth.). When one considers that, despite the grandiose scale of *The Lord of the Rings*, the everyday life of most inhabitants of Middle-earth remained unaffected by the grand schemes of Endor's leading individuals, it becomes evident that adventures of more modest scope than destroying the One Ring can be equally entertaining.

The basic purpose of role-playing is to create enjoyment, and each Middle-earth RPG design must be modeled to conform to the participants' own conception of Tolkien's world. Because it originates as literature, Middle-earth can possess no definitive RPG interpretation, and to shackle or constrain oneself to another's view as if it did would be a sure way of destroying the pleasure of gaming. OH

SUBMIT NOW!
SUBMIT NOW!
SUBMIT NOW!

Other Hands needs writers as well as readers in order for it to stay afloat, and we urge you to submit whatever you would like to see in print. Although we are still in discussion with Tolkien Enterprises as to the legality of publishing actual adventure scenarios within these pages, Iron Crown do not object in principle to such material being published in *Other Hands*, so long as they are not themselves excluded from participating in our journal. Issue 3 is scheduled for publication on October 1st, and September 14th will be the submission deadline for that issue (any materials received after that date will be published in the January issue). At present, we have the resources for translating submissions in Spanish, but all others must be received in readable English in order to be considered for publication.

The scope of this journal is ultimately defined by you, the subscriber. We list here some ideas for features we would like to see in the pages of future issues:

1) A letters column for those who wish to communicate and discuss about what others have written in the journal, or about any topic of gaming interest.
2) Constructive feedback on ICE products, or evaluations of *MERP* (both Iron Crown Enterprises and Tolkien Enterprises receive copies of *Other Hands*, so here is an opportunity to be heard).
3) Articles on how to treat certain aspects of Tolkien's world from the perspective of game mechanics (by a particular rule system or by rule systems in general).
4) Profiles on the inhabitants and creatures of Middle-earth (whether invented or taken from the books). Character interviews are also welcome.
5) Articles comparing aspects of Middle-earth by analogy to the history of our primary world (and suggestions for how such comparison might be exploited in the development of a campaign).
6) "Databases", or collections of references from Tolkien's works relevant to particular topic (e.g. Elves in the Fourth age).
7) Advice for gamemasters or how to run a Middle-earth campaign, or reflections on your own trials and tribulations as a GM or player.

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